

# UNFORGIVING SERVANT

MATTHEW 18:22-35



SHOW  
MERCY

## Teacher's Devotional

Do you think most people really believe in the kind of forgiveness God shows us? We agree that the unforgiving servant should have been much more merciful—but in our own lives, unlimited forgiveness isn't so popular. After all, shouldn't people be held accountable? Shouldn't our rights be protected? Consider: Is Jesus' teaching at odds with our cultural (or spiritual) values?

Most of what we hear and read focuses us on our individual rights rather than on the power of forgiveness. But look at Jesus instead: Under both Roman and Jewish law, He had the right to a fair trial, to own a home, to marry. However, Jesus chose to lay down these rights and many rights far greater (see Philippians 2) to accomplish our redemption. He chose to fully and unconditionally forgive even His murderers (see Luke 23:34) in pursuit of that redemption. First John 3:16 tells us that His behavior defines love—and its effect is far more powerful than winning any challenge to personal rights or holding any person to account. Such transforming forgiveness flows only from the heart of God—or from our own hearts as we are empowered by His Spirit!

We are called to live out kindness, compassion and forgiveness simply because we are forgiven. From whom are you holding back your forgiveness? Release that person. Give the situation to God. Let Him be the judge! Removing any root of bitterness first frees you and then releases others you didn't even realize were affected (see Hebrews 12:15). Instead of fearing you'll lose out, exercise your faith: Trust that God's ways are beyond ours and that His forgiveness is far more powerful than any personal right we could ever hold.

### GOD'S WORD

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Ephesians 4:32

### FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"Be kind and forgive each other."

### GOD'S WORD & ME

Because there is no limit to God's forgiveness for us, we can always show His mercy to others.



# PLANNING PAGE

Choose which centers you will provide and the order in which children will participate in them (see pp. 14-18 for schedule tips and pp. 24-25 for guidelines in combining older and younger children). Also plan who will lead each center (for staffing tips see pp. 19-21). Use the reproducible planning sheet (p. 238) to record your plans.

## BIBLE STORY CENTER

### BIBLE STORY

Unforgiving Servant • Matthew 18:22-35

### ADVENTURE BOX (YOUNGER CHILD)

Use props (toy or paper crown and three papers plates on which are drawn a sad face, a happy face and an angry face) to demonstrate story action

### ADVENTURE BOX (OLDER CHILD)

Use props (toy or paper crown, a large paper bag stuffed with newspaper and stapled shut, a small lunch bag stuffed halfway with paper and stapled shut) to demonstrate story action

## GAME CENTER

### YOUNGER CHILD OPTION

Play a game like Hot Potato to talk about the Bible story and ways to be kind when others have been mean

#### MATERIALS

Bible, Lesson 6 Pattern Page (p. 126), *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and player, scissors, paper bag or shoe box

### OLDER CHILD OPTION

Hit targets with discs to put the words of Ephesians 4:32 in order and tell ways to obey the verse by forgiving others

#### MATERIALS

Bible, large Post-it Notes, markers, for each team—a round plastic lid

## ART CENTER

### YOUNGER CHILD OPTION

Make and play maracas and talk about what it means to forgive others

#### MATERIALS

Bible, *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and player, stickers, craft foam adhesive shapes, dried beans or unpopped popcorn kernels, painter's tape; for each child—two large colorful plastic cups

### OLDER CHILD OPTION

Make wristbands to wear as reminders to show mercy and forgiveness to others

#### MATERIALS

Bible, 1¼x10-inch (3.1x25.5-cm) strip of craft foam for each child, scissors, several colors of plastic tape or electrical tape and/or small stickers

## COLORING/PUZZLE CENTER

### YOUNGER CHILD OPTION

Review the Bible story while completing coloring page

#### MATERIALS

Lesson 6 Coloring Page (p.127) for each child, crayons

### OLDER CHILD OPTION

Review Ephesians 4:32 while completing puzzle page

#### MATERIALS

Lesson 6 Puzzle Page (p. 128) for each child, pencils

## WORSHIP CENTER

### FOR THE YOUNGER AND OLDER CHILD

Participate in large-group activities to review Bible verse and to worship God together

#### MATERIALS

Bibles, *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and CD player, song charts (pp. 251-252)

# BONUS THEME IDEAS

Bonus Theme Ideas can be used at any time during this session: as an additional activity center, to extend the session for a longer time, or for added theme excitement.

## BUG CREATIONS

In separate containers, provide vanilla wafers, vanilla frosting and several of the following decorative items: colored sugar, colored O-shaped cereal, sprinkles, mini cake decorations and gel icing. Set out plastic spoons and knives. Children create their own rainforest bugs by spreading frosting on wafers and then using the decorative items to create eyes, mouth, legs and ears.

Post a note alerting parents to the use of food. Also, check registration forms for possible food allergies.

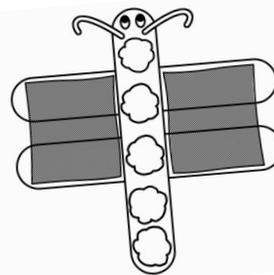


## RAINFOREST VISITORS

Arrange for one or more "visitors" from the rainforest to come to *Parable Quest*. Consider these sources: (1) someone in your church congregation who has a pet bird (parrot, toucan or macaw), frog or iguana; (2) a local pet store or zoo that would be willing to loan an animal for display. Ask the pet owner to briefly describe the animal. (Optional: Have each child's picture taken as he or she stands near the animal.) If live animals aren't an option, find on the Internet one or more short videos of rainforest animals to show children.

## RAINFOREST SOUVENIR

Help each child make a fun dragonfly souvenir to take home as a reminder of *Parable Quest*. Ahead of time, glue two craft sticks to a tongue depressor to form body and wing outlines of dragonfly. Allow glue to dry. Children cut tissue paper to fit wings and use glue stick to glue paper onto wing outlines. (Optional: For younger children, pre-cut wings.) Children glue small pom poms to body and small wiggly eyes to head. Small pieces of chenille wire can be glued on for antennae.



# BIBLE STORY CENTER

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN • MATTHEW 18:22-35

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome your rainforest explorers by saying, **Let's play a game and walk like animals in the rainforest.** Have children stand in a circle. Ask them to move like each of the following animals: hop like a frog, pounce like a jaguar, fly like a parrot, slowly walk like a sloth, swim like a fish, etc. Then show Adventure Box. **What do you think is in our Adventure Box today? Let's find out!** Untie box. Remove items from box and use them to demonstrate story action as you tell the story.



### ADVENTURE BOX

In a cardboard or wooden box labeled "Adventure," place a Bible, a toy or paper crown and three papers plates on which are drawn a sad face, a happy face and an angry face. Tie rope or brown yarn around the box or crate.

## TELL THE STORY

One day, Jesus' friend Peter wanted to know what he should do when someone had been mean to him. Listen to what Jesus said Peter should do when someone had been unkind.

Once there was a man who worked for a king. *(Invite one child to wear the toy or paper crown.)* This man had asked the king for lots and lots of money and had promised that he would pay it all back. One day, the king told this man, "Pay back all the money you borrowed from me. And pay me right now!" But the man didn't have the money. How do you think the man felt? *(Invite a volunteer to choose and show the "sad" plate face.)*

The king called one of his helpers. The king told his helper, "Since this man cannot pay me, take everything he has, sell it and give that money to me!" How do you think the king felt? *(Volunteer chooses and shows the "angry" plate face.)*

The man fell to his knees. "No! No!" the man cried. "I promise to pay you back!" The king changed his mind. He felt sorry for this man. "I FORGIVE you," said the king. "You do not have to pay back ANY of the money." How do you think the man felt now? *(Volunteer chooses and shows the "happy" plate face.)*

The king had been so kind! He had FORGIVEN the man. Now you would think that the man would be happy and kind, too. But on the way home, the man saw a friend. This friend had borrowed just a LITTLE money from him. Instead of being kind and happy, the man grabbed his friend. How do you think the man looked? *(Volunteer chooses and shows the "angry" plate face.)*

He shouted at his friend, "Pay back the money you owe me! Pay it back right now." How do you think the man's friend felt? *(Volunteer chooses and shows the "sad" plate face.)*

The friend got down on his knees. His friend begged, "Please wait for a little while. I promise to pay you back." But the man would NOT forgive his friend. The man had his friend put in jail!

The king heard how the man had NOT forgiven his friend. How do you think the king's face looked when he heard this? *(Volunteer chooses and shows the "angry" plate face.)* The king was so angry that he sent the unkind man to jail.

After the story, Jesus told Peter, "God is like the king. God forgave you a lot. So God wants you to ALWAYS forgive other people."

## GOD'S WORD & ME

**I am so glad that God forgives me when I have done something wrong. And because God loves me so much, He wants me to show His love and forgive others when they do wrong. We can say kind words when others have been mean. Pray, Dear God, thank You for loving us. Please help us to love others and forgive them. In Jesus' name, amen.**



# BIBLE STORY CENTER

FOR OLDER CHILDREN • MATTHEW 18:22-35

## INTRODUCTION

**Let's guess letters to discover some words we'll see in our story**

**today.** Draw a blank line for each letter in this equation: "Debt = I owe money." Children guess letters of the alphabet. Write correct letters on the blanks. When children have discovered the phrase, invite several volunteers to tell about a time they owed money. **Listen to find out what happened to a man who owed a LOT of money—to a king!**

**What do you think is in our Adventure Box today? Let's find out!**

Untie box. Remove items from box and use them to demonstrate story action as you tell the story.



### ADVENTURE BOX

In a cardboard or wooden box labeled "Adventure," place a Bible, a toy or paper crown, a large paper bag stuffed with newspaper and stapled shut, a small lunch bag stuffed halfway with paper and stapled shut. Tie rope or brown yarn around the box or crate.

## TELL THE STORY

One day when Jesus was talking with His disciples, Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how often should I forgive a person who sins against me? Is it enough to forgive the person seven times?" Peter probably thought that it was very GENEROUS to forgive someone seven times!

But Jesus told Peter that he needed to forgive MANY more times than seven! Then Jesus went on to tell Peter a story to help him understand. (*Invite three or more volunteers to pantomime story action as you tell the story. Give crown to child who will act as king.*)

Once, a king was checking on how much money people owed him. He discovered that one of his servants owed him lots and lots and LOTS of money. Over time, this servant had borrowed FAR more than he could ever repay! (*Show large bag and then give it to person playing the part of the servant.*)

The king called for this servant to come to him. He said to the servant, "It's time to pay back all the money you have borrowed from me!" But the servant didn't have the money. He couldn't POSSIBLY pay this debt!

The king called his guards and said, "This servant cannot pay what he owes me. Take him, his wife his family and everything he has—and SELL them. Let's get this debt PAID!"

The servant fell to his knees. "No! No!" he begged the king. "Please, be patient with me. I promise I'll pay you everything I owe!"

The king looked at his servant—he was sweating and crying and scared! The king changed his mind. He said, "I forgive you. Your debt is gone. You do not have to pay back ANY money. You may go home, FREE of your debt."

Can you imagine how AMAZED the servant must have been? WOW! In one moment, his whole life was changed! He no longer had to live with all that WORRY about the money he couldn't pay back. He was saved from losing his home and his family. He was saved from becoming a SLAVE!

The servant must have skipped out of the palace! The king had been so kind! He had FORGIVEN him! Now, you might think that the servant would be SO happy and that he couldn't WAIT to be kind to someone else! But on the way home, the man saw a friend of his. (*Show small bag and then give it to person playing the part of the friend.*)

This friend had borrowed just a LITTLE money from this servant. And instead of being kind and happy, the servant GRABBED his friend. He began to choke him, shouting, "Pay back the MONEY you owe me! Pay it back RIGHT NOW!"

His friend fell to his knees. "No! No!" he begged the servant. "Please, be patient with me. I promise I'll pay you everything I owe!" But the servant would NOT forgive his friend. Instead, he had his friend put in JAIL because he owed him the money! But other people saw what the servant had done to his friend. They were upset to see the way the servant treated a friend who owed him only a LITTLE money! These people went to the king and told him what they saw.

Well, when the king heard what his servant had done to his friend, he called for the servant to come to see him AGAIN. The king said, "You are a wicked servant. I forgave you ALL the money you owed me because you begged me to. But I know what you did to your friend—you would not forgive him even a SMALL debt! Shouldn't you have forgiven his debt like I forgave yours? I had mercy on you—you should have had mercy on him!" The king was very angry. He sent this mean, unforgiving servant to jail!

After the story, Jesus said, "God is like the king. God forgives you for EVERYTHING. He expects you to treat others the way He has treated you—with forgiveness and mercy! So God wants you to ALWAYS forgive other people."

## GOD'S WORD & ME

It's really easy to look at other people and think that they should forgive us, isn't it? But because God forgave us of ALL our sins, He want us to treat other people in the same way He has treated us! When we show forgiveness and mercy, we are showing our family likeness to God our Father! He wants us to be known for our forgiveness and mercy!



• **What do you think the servant would have told you if you'd visited him in jail?**

(It's good to be forgiven. And it's a good idea to forgive.)

• Invite a child to read aloud Ephesians 4:32. **Why does this verse say we should forgive others?**

• **What are some times it is really hard to forgive another person?** (When the person breaks a promise, tells a lie about you or hurts you.) Allow a short time for children to silently forgive people they need to forgive. Pray with children, asking God to help them forgive others.



# GAME CENTER

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN • MATTHEW 18:22-35

## COLLECT

Bible, Lesson 6 Pattern Page (p. 126), *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and player, scissors, paper bag or shoe box; optional—markers, paper clips.

## PREPARE

For each group of six children, make two copies of Lesson 6 Pattern Page on different colors of paper. Cut apart the page to make sets of Bible story cards. (Optional: Make a copy of the page for each child.)

## DO

1. Children sit in a circle of up to six players. Give each child a Bible story card. Place another set of cards in bag or box.
2. When you play "Love Never Fails," children pass bag or box. After 10 to 20 seconds, stop the music. Child holding the bag or box removes one Bible story card and places it faceup in the middle of the circle and tells what is happening in the picture. Child with matching card places it on top of the first card. Continue until all cards have been removed from the bag or box.
3. Children place cards in Bible story order. Collect cards and repeat game as time and interest allow. (Optional: Each child colors a set of cards to take home. Fasten cards together with paper clip.)

## TALK ABOUT

- Jesus told a story about a king who was kind. Jesus told this story to help us remember to be kind, too. When we forgive someone who has done something wrong to us, we are being kind. Jesus loves us and He wants us to love other people, too.
- What is something mean a kid your age might do to someone else? (Not want to share. Not take turns.) The Bible says, "Be kind and forgive each other." When someone does something wrong, we can say "stop" and get a teacher or parent to help us. Then we can treat the person kindly. When we are kind, we show mercy.
- What is something kind a kid your age might do? (Let someone choose first. Say kind words. Help someone do a chore.)
- Who is someone you can be kind to? Pray briefly, Dear God, please help us forgive others and be kind. In Jesus' name, amen.

## FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Make a set of Bible story game cards for each child and lead children to play a game like Pit. Shuffle all cards together and give six cards to each child. At your signal, children begin trading their cards, calling out the number of cards they are trading and trying to get a set of six matching cards. When a child has collected a set of six matching cards, child stands up and calls out "Show mercy."

### GOD'S WORD

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

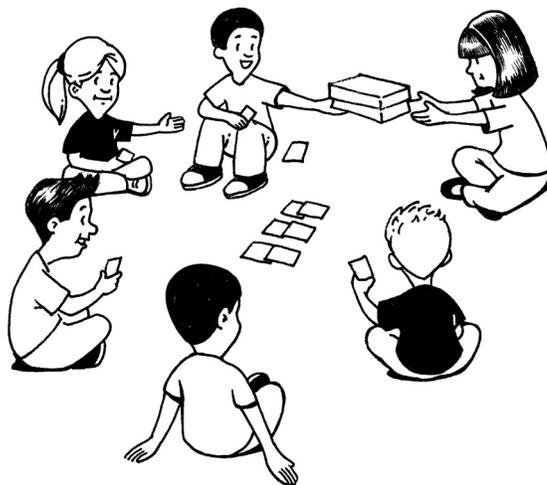
Ephesians 4:32

### FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"Be kind and forgive each other."

### GOD'S WORD & ME

Because there is no limit to God's forgiveness for us, we can always show His mercy to others.



# GAME CENTER

FOR OLDER CHILDREN • MATTHEW 18:22-35

## COLLECT

Bible, large Post-it Notes, markers, for each team—a round plastic lid; optional—permanent marker.

## PREPARE

Write each word of Ephesians 4:32 on a separate Post-it Note, making a set of notes for each team. Place the notes on the floor at one side of the room to mark targets. (Optional: Set up the targets outdoors.)

## DO

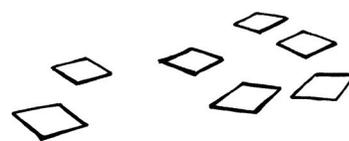
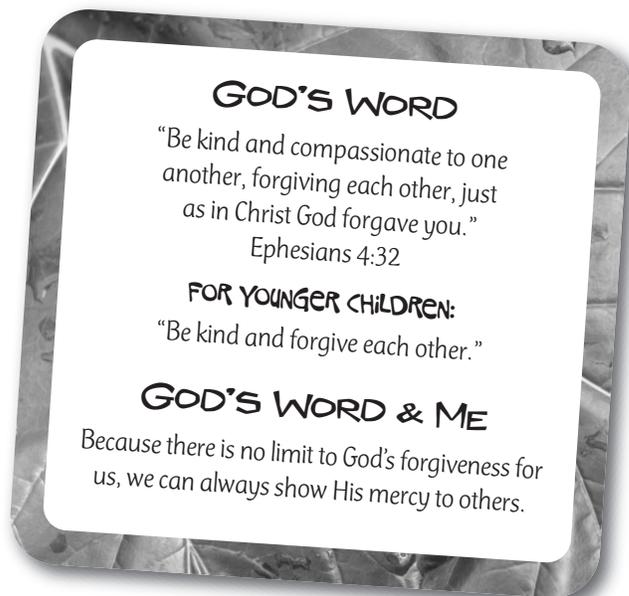
1. Children form two or more teams of up to eight players each. Teams line up across the room from the targets. Give each team a plastic lid. (Optional: Players on each team choose a team name and write it on the team's lid.)
2. At your signal, first player on each team tosses his or her disc towards the targets. Child collects the target the disc lands on or near. Next players take a turn. Play continues until all targets have been collected.
3. Players on each team assemble the words of the verse in order, showing kindness by trading words as needed with other team(s).

## TALK ABOUT

- Read Ephesians 4:32 aloud. **What does this verse say that God has done? Why does God forgive people? What does this verse say that people can do?**
- **How would your school be different if kids obeyed this verse? Your soccer team?**
- **How many examples of ways to obey Ephesians 4:32 can you think of? What are they?**
- **Sometimes we might think that God won't keep forgiving us. But if we ask His forgiveness and help to do right in the future, He does forgive us. He is merciful, even though we don't deserve it.** Lead children in prayer, asking God's help in showing mercy and forgiveness to others.

## FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Use the verse as paraphrased for younger children: "Be kind and forgive each other." Instead of tossing discs, attach Post-it Notes to wall across an open area of the room. Children form teams of up to six players and take turns running across the room to collect notes, one at a time.



# ART CENTER

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN • MATTHEW 18:22-35

## COLLECT

Bible, *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and player, stickers, craft foam adhesive shapes, dried beans or unpopped popcorn kernels, painter's tape; for each child—two large colorful plastic cups.

## PREPARE

Make a sample maraca following instructions below.

## DO

1. Give each child two cups. Child decorates cups with stickers and adhesive shapes.
2. Child places small handful of dried beans or unpopped popcorn kernels into one cup. Help each child hold cups as you tape the rims together.
3. Play "Forgiving and Good" while children shake their maracas.

## TALK ABOUT

• **I see lots of our friends being kind to each other. I see Cameron helping to pick up the cups that fell. I'm glad you know how to be kind. That's what the Bible tells us to do: "Be kind and forgive each other." Who can you be kind to?**

• **Sometimes children don't remember to be kind. When children are mean, how do you feel? (Angry. Sad.) We can ask God to help us be kind, even when someone is mean. What are some kind things we can do? (Use our words to say "stop" instead of hitting or pushing. Wait our turn to play with a toy.)**

• **God is kind to us, even when we do wrong things. God always loves us and will forgive us.** Lead children in prayer, thanking God for His love and forgiveness.

## FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Encourage older children to make patterns with adhesive shapes on their cups. Also provide a variety of items which children may use to make sound in their maracas (pennies, rice, paper clips, large pom poms, etc.). Children trade maracas to hear the different sounds. In addition to using maracas while listening to music, children may create rhythmic patterns while saying the words of Ephesians 4:32.



# ART CENTER

FOR OLDER CHILDREN • MATTHEW 18:22-35

## COLLECT

Bible, 1¼x10-inch (3.1x25.5-cm) strip of craft foam for each child, scissors, several colors of plastic tape or electrical tape and/or small stickers.

## PREPARE

Make a sample wrist band following directions below.

## DO

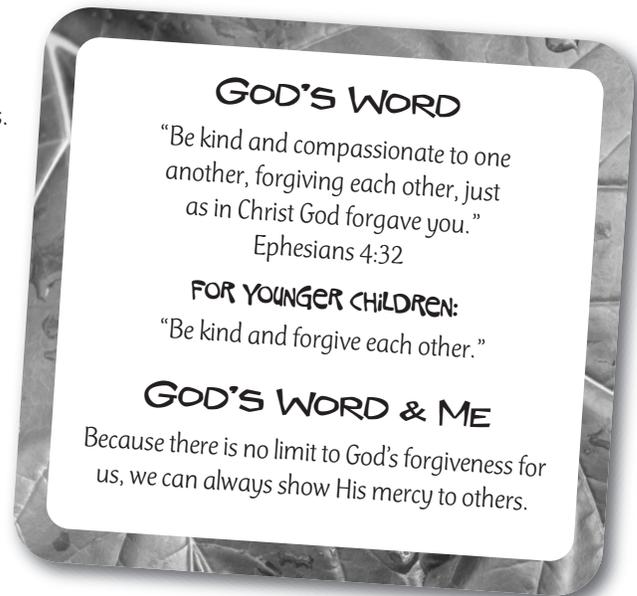
1. Give each child a strip of craft foam. Child measures strip around his or her wrist and trims it so that there is about 1 inch (2.5 cm) of overlap. Help child as needed to cut a slit in each end of the craft foam so that ends fit together (sketch a).
2. Children choose colors of tape and cut off short strips to wrap around their wrist bands, leaving the ends with slits unwrapped (sketches b and c). Encourage children to create patterns with the tape (squares, diamond-shaped, diagonal stripes, triangles, etc.). Children may also put stickers on their bands.
3. Explain to children that they can wear their wrist bands as reminders to show mercy to others.

## TALK ABOUT

- **How would you define the word “mercy”?** (Showing kindness and compassion to someone who doesn’t deserve it.) **Do you think it is hard or easy to be someone who shows mercy? Why?**
- **In what ways have your parents shown mercy and forgiveness to you? What has God done to show mercy and forgiveness to everyone?** Read Ephesians 4:32 aloud.
- **What changes might kids your age want to make in their lives after hearing Ephesians 4:32? Think about how you want your own life and actions to change.** Lead children in prayer, asking God’s help in showing mercy and forgiving others.

## FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

For each child, print the words “Be kind” on a sheet of craft foam or card stock. Children decorate their pages using short lengths of tape and markers. Children take home decorated pages as reminders to obey Ephesians 4:32.



a.



b.



c.



# WORSHIP CENTER

MATTHEW 18:22-35

## COLLECT

Bibles, *Parable Quest* CD-ROM and CD player, song charts (pp. 251-252).

## PREPARATION

Prepare clues for several rainforest animals (see below).

## TEAM GAME

Divide group into three or more teams. Give clues one at a time to a variety of rainforest animals. Teams try to guess the animals. For example, for a jaguar you might say these clues: "Has four legs." "Roars." "Has spots." Give the hardest or most general clues first. Other examples are: Monkey—"Good at holding onto things." "Often brown in color." "Makes loud sounds." Frog—"Good at holding onto things." "Can be poisonous." "Has sticky fingers."

## BIBLE VERSE GAME

Repeat Ephesians 4:32 aloud with children, dividing it into four phrases. Secretly assign one of the four phrases of the verse to each child. Children move around the room to form groups by whispering their assigned phrases to others, looking for those whose phrases match. When all children have found their group, repeat verse aloud. Play several rounds, or as time permits.

## SONG

You, or another leader, lead children in singing "God Forgives Us," adding motions and/or clapping if desired.

## PRAYER

**Think of some friends you know whom you could help to forgive each other and treat each other with mercy.** Lead children in silently praying for these people. End prayer by thanking God for His forgiveness and asking His help in showing mercy and kindness to others.

## SONG

You, or another leader, lead children in singing "Love Never Fails," adding motions and/or clapping if desired.

### GOD'S WORD

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

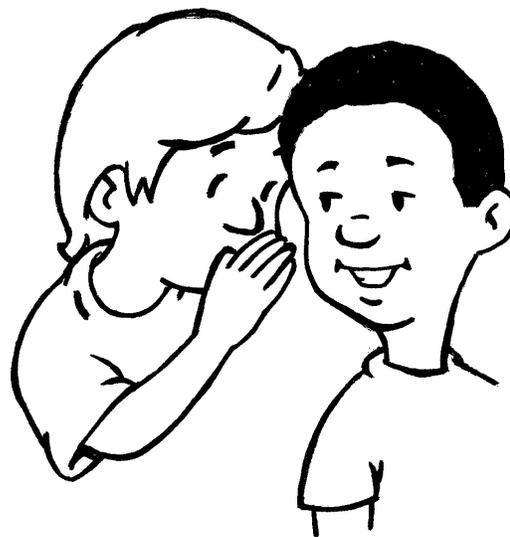
Ephesians 4:32

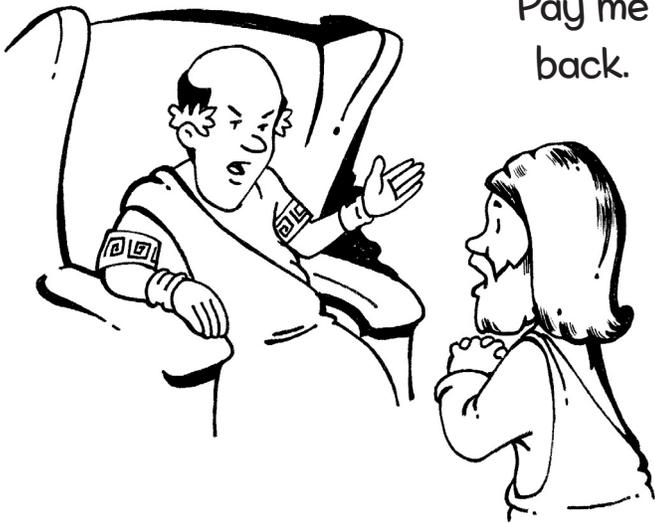
### FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

"Be kind and forgive each other."

### GOD'S WORD & ME

Because there is no limit to God's forgiveness for us, we can always show His mercy to others.





Thank you.



Take him away.

Jesus tells the story of the forgiving king.

Matthew 18:21-35



Who can you forgive? Who can you be kind to?

